93-01061/

BC Parks

VISITOR SATISFACTION

at PROVINCIAL PARK
Campgrounds and Day-Use
(Picnic) Areas

May 1992

Province of British Columbia
Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data
Main entry under title:
Visitor satisfaction at provincial park campgrounds and day-use (picnic) areas

ISBN 0-7726-1621-3

1. Camp sites, facilities, etc. - British Columbia - Public opinion - Statistics. 2. Picnic grounds - British Columbia - Public opinion - Statistics. 3. Parks - British Columbia - Public opinion - Statistics. 4. Public opinion - British Columbia. I. BC Parks.

GV191.46.B7V58 1992 647.9711 C92-092286-4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Introduction 1

Campgrounds Summary 5

-Visitor Characteristics 6

-Visitor Satisfaction 7

-Satisfaction by Visitor Characteristics 10

-Meeting Overall Expectations 13

Findings

1. Origin 14
2. Satisfaction Ratings 15
3. 1990 Versus 1991 Ratings 16
4. Importance Rankings 17
5. Satisfaction by Administrative Region 18
6. Satisfaction by Visitor Origin 19
7. Expectations by Origin 20

Day-Use (Picnic) Areas Summary 23

Findings

1. Origin 24
2. Expectations 25
3. Satisfaction 26
4. Importance (1989-1991) 27
5. Day Use Recreation Activities 28
6. Visitor Profile 29

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

BC Parks, a major supplier of outdoor recreation oportunities and experiences in British Columbia, has a goal to provide quality service and achieve high visitor satisfaction. To help determine how well this goal is being met, BC Parks has conducted annual visitor satisfaction surveys at provincial park campgrounds and day-use (picnic) areas since 1985.

The purpose of these annual surveys is to determine how park visitors feel about B.C. Park's camping and day-use facilities and services; to determine what changes in facilities and services they would like to see in parks; to find out what visitors do in the parks, and to collect visitor profile information.

It is B.C.Parks' policy to conduct surveys in about one third of it's highway accessible campgrounds and day-use areas each year, to ensure that all such parks are surveyed every three years.

The 1991 visitor satisfaction surveys produced random samples[1] of 9,978 returned questionnaires from 53 provincial park campgrounds and 2984 questionnaires from 28 day-use (picnic) areas. Park facility operators gave out campground survey questionnaires from May to September, day use surveys lasted from June to September.

This report presents some of the key findings from these surveys.

---

[1] **See footnote, page 5.**

1991 VISITOR SATISFACTION

AT PROVINCIAL PARK CAMPGROUNDS

CAMPGROUND SURVEY SUMMARY

Of the 9978 randomly sampled visitors[2], from 53 campgrounds located throughout B.C., about 36 percent of the returned questionnaires were from the South Coast region, about 37 percent were from the Southern Interior region and the remaining 27 percent from the Northern B.C. region (see regions map, below).

B.C. PARKS MANAGEMENT REGIONS

[2] **The survey was conducted with a disproportionate, stratified, systematic sample of campground visitors between May and September, 1991. For more details about the methodology, the interested reader is referred to a report entitled "A Proposed Sampling Plan for B.C. Park Campgrounds" February, 1990.**

VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS

One key finding of the campground survey is that the percent of British Columbians who used provincial park campgrounds decreased by 10 percent in 1991 (from 72% in 1990 to 62% in 1991) (see table 1). This means that even though camping use at provincial park campgrounds increased by nearly 3 percent over the past year, there was a net reduction in the number of British Columbians who used these campgrounds in 1991. The reasons for this downward shift by British Columbians are not known.

Table 1 Geographical Origin of BC Park Campers

	1990	1991
	.....percent....	
British Columbians	72	62
Albertans	12	**15**
Washington/Oregon/California	5	**8**
Abroad	4	**6**
Rest of U.S.A.	5	5
Other Canadian provinces	2	**4**

Note: Significant differences indicated by **darker** print.

A second key finding is that many of the non-resident campers were first-time visitors to the park in which they were surveyd (combined 72%; see table 2). By comparison, the percent of first-time visitors among British Columbians was considerably lower (49%). There also was a **higher percent** of **camping parties without children** among **visitors** from the **U.S. Western States** (Washington, Oregon and California - combined 79%) than among **British Columbians** and **Albertans** (combined 58%).

Table 2 Types of Parties by Geographical Origin

	B.C.	Alta	Wash. Ore/Cal	Abroad
	.....percent.....			
Frequency of Use				
First time visitor	49	61	**81**	**91**
Repeat visitor	**51**	39	12	9
Make-up of Party				
With no children	59	57	**78**	**80**
With children	**41**	**43**	22	20

Note: Significant differences indicated by **darker** print.

VISITOR SATISFACTION

Provincial level. In 1990, BC Parks established management standards for 12 service items. These standards were based on the highest satisfaction ratings (% excellent and above average) obtained from the satisfaction surveys conducted between 1987 and 1990.

A third key finding from the 1991 survey is that the satisfaction ratings for 7 of the 12 service items were higher than their respective standards (see table 3). The 7 items are:

- **cleanliness of restrooms (up 3%);**
- **sense of security (up 4%);**
- **cleanliness of grounds (up 8%);**
- **condition of facilities (up 10%);**
- **availability of firewood (up 5%);**
- **control of pets (up 3%); and**
- **upkeep of roads (up 6%).**

The increases in the ratings for the first four of the seven items (**cleanliness of restrooms, sense of security, cleanliness of grounds and condition of facilities**) is particularly significant because these items were selected by park visitors as being the most important management items during their stay in the campground. The rating for **cleanliness of restrooms (72%)** also marks the first time it exceeded the 70 percent level.

Table 3 Visitor Satisfaction

MANAGEMENT ITEMS (in order of importance)	MOST IMPORTANT ITEM[3]	MANAGEMENT STANDARD	1991 SATISFACTION
	.....percent.....		
Cleanliness of restrooms.....	27.9	69	**72**
Sense of security.....	17.2	69	**73**
Cleanliness of grounds.....	14.9	82	**90**
Condition of facilities.....	10.1	75	**85**
Control of noise.....	8.2	66	67
Recreational things to do....	7.9	**62**	48
Value for the fee.....	4.6	N/A	68
Availability of firewood.....	3.2	76	**81**
Responsiveness of staff.....	2.9	81	81
Ease of camp. registration...	.8	new	77
Control of pets.....	.6	59	**62**
Enough park information.....	.6	**62**	57
Upkeep of roads.....	.4	70	**76**
Sufficient directional signs.	.2	**59**	56

Note: Significant differences indicated by **darker** print.

[3] **The question was: Which of the above facilities and services are most important to you during your stay in this campground? The figure presented indicates the percentage of respondents who indicated that this was the most important item to them of the 12 listed in the survey form.**

At the same time, the ratings for **3 items fell below their respective standards**. These items are:

- **recreational things to do (down 14%);**
- **enough park information (down 5%); and**
- **sufficient directional signs (down 3%).**

The decrease in the rating for **recreational things to do** is perhaps more significant than the decrease in the ratings for the other two items because of the respective importance that park visitors attached to each of these items. **Recreational things to do** ranked 6th in importance while **enough park information** and **sufficient directional signs** respectively ranked 12th and 14th in importance. The rating for **recreational things to do** has also fallen steadily since 1989 (from 54% in 1989, 52% in 1990 to 48% in 1991). The reasons for the downward trend in the rating for this item are not clear.[4]

Regional level. Satisfaction ratings were examined at the park management regional level to determine where the shifts in the provincial ratings may have occurred (see table 4). Several key patterns emerged. First, the provincial rating for **cleanliness of restrooms (73%)** was strongly influenced by **higher ratings in the Northern B.C. region (77%)** and the **Southern Interior Region (74%)** and a rating that remained near the management standard (69%) in the South Coast Region (67%) . Second, **all regions** contributed to the **higher ratings** for the **next 3 most important items (sense of security, cleanliness of grounds, condition of facilities).** Third, **all regions** contributed to the low rating for **recreational things to do** (48%).

---

[4] One aspect which may have affected the rating for this item over the past five years is the different phrasing that has been used for the concept of recreation opportunity. In an effort to ensure that the concept of recreation opportunity is adequately and consistently understood by respondents, BC Parks has tried to improve the phrasing for this concept: 1987 = "Enough things for your group to do in (or near) the park" (65%); 1988 = "Variety of recreational activities in the park" (49%); 1989 = "Number of recreational things to do in the park" (54%); 1990 = "Number of recreational things to do in the park" (52%); 1991 = "Number of recreational things to do in this park" (48%). For a fuller discussion of this issue, the reader is referred to a paper entitled "BC Parks Campground Satisfaction Survey: Some Methodological Issues" (May, 1990).

It should also be noted that an open-ended question in the 1991 survey was asked to help identify the kinds of recreation services and facilities park visitors might like to see in provincial park campgrounds, but the results are still being analyzed.

Table 4 Visitor Satisfaction By Park Management Region

Management items (in order of importance)	MANAGEMENT STANDARD	SOUTH COAST	SOUTH INTER.	NORTH B.C.
		percent		
Cleanliness of restrooms.....	69	67	**74**	**77**
Sense of security.....	69	**74**	**73**	**72**
Cleanliness of grounds.....	82	**89**	**91**	**89**
Condition of facilities.....	75	**86**	**87**	**80**
Control of noise.....	66	67	**69**	64
Recreational things to do....	62	**50**	**44**	**51**
Value for the fee.....	NA	68	69	65
Availability of firewood.....	76	77	**84**	**80**
Responsiveness of staff.....	81	81	83	**77**
Ease of camp. registration...	new	74	77	82
Control of pets.....	59	62	**63**	60
Enough park information.....	62	**58**	**59**	**55**
Upkeep of roads.....	70	**76**	**78**	**75**
Sufficient directional signs.	59	58	**56**	**56**

Note: Significant differences indicated by **darker** print.

SATISFACTION BY VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS

Various factors may have contributed to the higher satisfaction ratings for many of the management items in 1991. One of the factors is specific management actions or improvements undertaken at the individual parks. Another factor is a shift in the type of campground user. To determine the possible affect of this latter factor, satisfaction ratings were examined for three different visitor characteristics: location of residence, frequency of use and make-up of party.

Location of residence. **A fourth key finding is that non-residents usually tend to give higher satisfaction ratings than residents** (see table 5).

Table 5 Visitor Satisfaction By Geographical Origin

MANAGEMENT ITEM (in order of importance)	B.C.	ALBERTA	WASH/OREG/CAL
		.....percent.....	
Cleanliness of restrooms.....	70	71	**83**
Sense of security.....	72	72	**85**
Cleanliness of grounds.....	88	**92**	**95**
Condition of facilities.....	82	**87**	**95**
Control of noise.....	66	67	69
Recreational things to do....	47	46	**56**
Value for the fee.....	67	66	**75**
Availability of firewood.....	78	**81**	**91**
Responsiveness of staff.....	79	80	**89**
Ease of campground registrat.	75	76	**87**
Control of pets.....	60	61	**71**
Enough park information.....	55	**59**	**70**
Upkeep of roads.....	73	**81**	**84**
Sufficient directional signs.	55	55	**64**

Note: Significant differences from B.C. resident responses indicated by **darker** print.

When satisfaction ratings were compared between British Columbians and visitors from U.S. Western States (Washington, Oregon and California), the **ratings for all items, except for control of noise, were significantly higher among visitors from the Western U.S. States than among British Columbians**. When satisfaction ratings were compared among Albertans and British Columbians, **Albertans rated 5 management items (cleanliness of grounds, condition of facilities, upkeep of roads, availability of firewood, enough park information) significantly higher than British Columbians.**

Frequency of use. Satisfaction ratings were also compared between repeat and first time visitors and the largest difference occurred in signage (see table 6). **First-time visitors (53%) tended to give lower ratings for sufficient number of directional signs than repeat visitors (61%).** This implies that having a sufficient number of directional signs may be slightly more important in parks which have a high proportion of new visitors (e.g. Goldstream, etc.) as compared to parks which have a low proportion of new visitors (e.g Gordon Bay, etc.).

Table 6 Satisfaction By Frequency of Use

MANAGEMENT ITEMS (in order of importance)	Repeat User	First User
	.....percent.....	
Sense of security.....	**75**	71
Cleanliness of grounds.....	88	**91**
Condition of facilities.....	83	**86**
Control of noise.....	**69**	65
Availability of firewood.....	78	**82**
Upkeep of roads.....	74	**77**
Sufficient directional signs.	**61**	53

Note: Significant differences are indicated by **darker** print.

Make-up of Party The major difference in the rating between parties with children and without children occurred in **cleanliness of restrooms. Parties without children (74%) tended to give a higher rating to cleanliness of restrooms than did parties with children (68%).** While keeping restrooms clean is viewed as the most important management task by many park visitors, this finding suggests that it may be even more important in those parks which have a very high percentage of children compared to those parks which have a low percentage of children.

Table 7 Satisfaction By Make-up of Party

MANAGEMENT ITEMS (in order of importance)	With No Children	With Children
	.....percent.....	
Cleanliness of restrooms.....	**74**	68
Recreational things to do....	47	**50**
Value for fee.....	66	**70**

Note: Significant differences indicated by **darker** print.

MEETING OVERALL EXPECTATIONS

A fifth key finding of this survey is that nearly 4 in 10 respondents (39%) indicated their original expectations had been somewhat or far exceeded (see table 8). The extent to which original expectations were somewhat or far exceeded was also **higher among non-residents** (combined 46% vs 35% for residents) and **first-time visitors** (77% vs 26% for repeat visitors).

Table 8 Extent of Fulfilling Original Expectations

	ALL	B.C.	ALBERTA RESIDENT	WASH/ORE/CAL
		.....percent.....		
Far exceeded.....	**15**	12	16	28
Somewhat exceeded.....	**24**	23	26	28
Met expectations.....	55	60	53	40
Somewhat fell short.....	5	5	4	4
Fell far short.....	1	<1	<1	<1

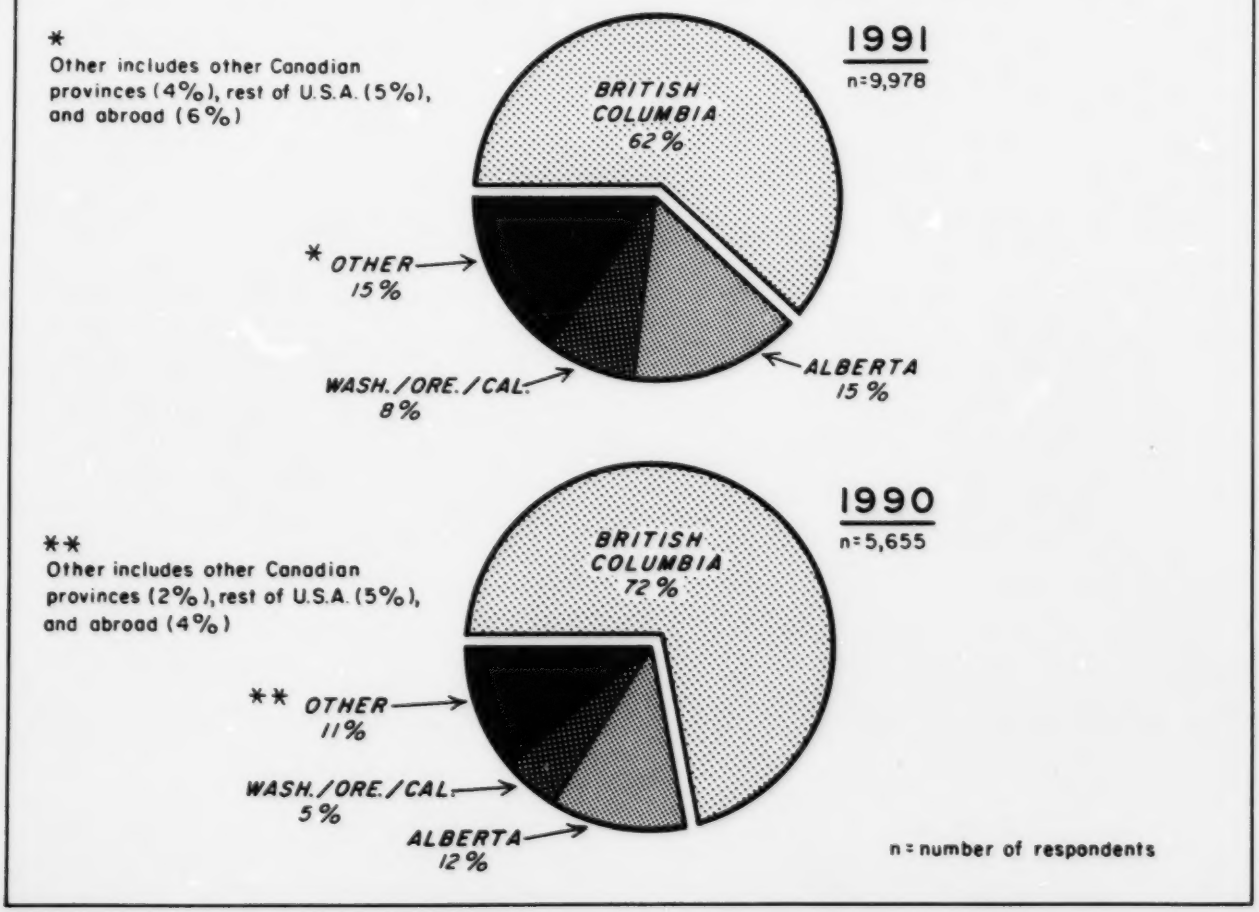
DETAILED FINDINGS

1. **Slightly more than 6 in 10 campers (62%) at provincial park campgrounds were from British Columbia.**

About 6 in 10 campers were first time visitors to the park in which they were surveyed (59%). By comparison, this was about 9 percent higher than in 1990 (50%).

Slightly less than one-third of the campers used just tents (29%) while more than two-thirds used a recreation vehicle or a combination of tents and recreation vehicle (61%).

GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF CAMPERS AT PROVINCIAL PARK CAMPGROUNDS, 1990 + 1991

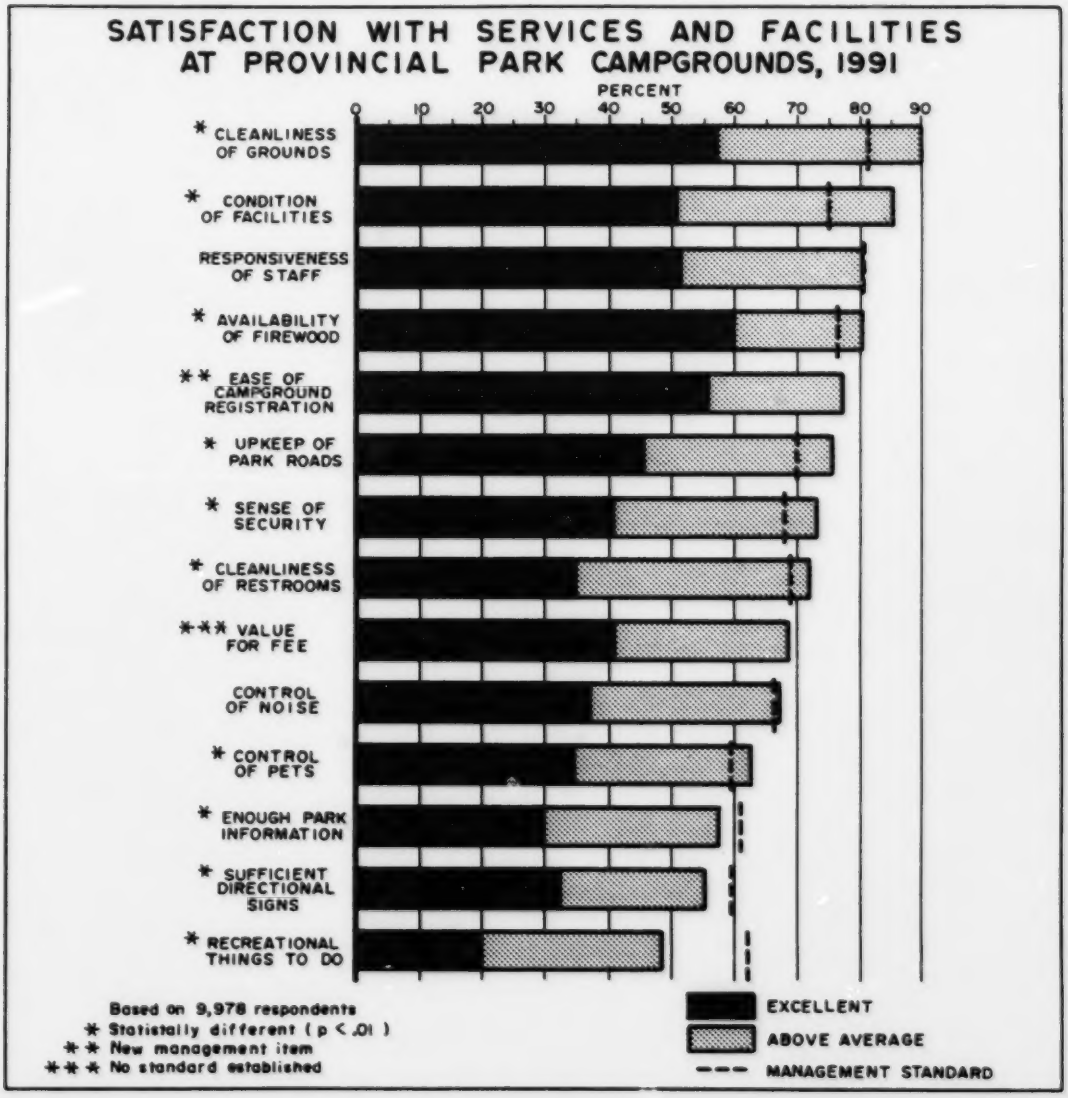


The questions were: (In or near) what town or city is your home located? First, have you ever stayed in this campground before? The response alternatives were: YES, NO, NOT SURE. Which of the following best describes the type(s) of camping shelter you are using in this campground on this trip? The response alternatives were: TENT, TENT TRAILER, TRUCK CAMPER, VAN, TRAVEL TRAILER/5TH WHEEL, MOTOR HOME, OTHER.

2. Satisfaction ratings for **7 of the 12 management items were higher than their respective standards.**

About 9 in 10 campers rated **cleanliness of grounds** (90%) either excellent or above average.

Less than half (48%) of the park visitors felt that the number of recreation things to do in the park were excellent or above average.

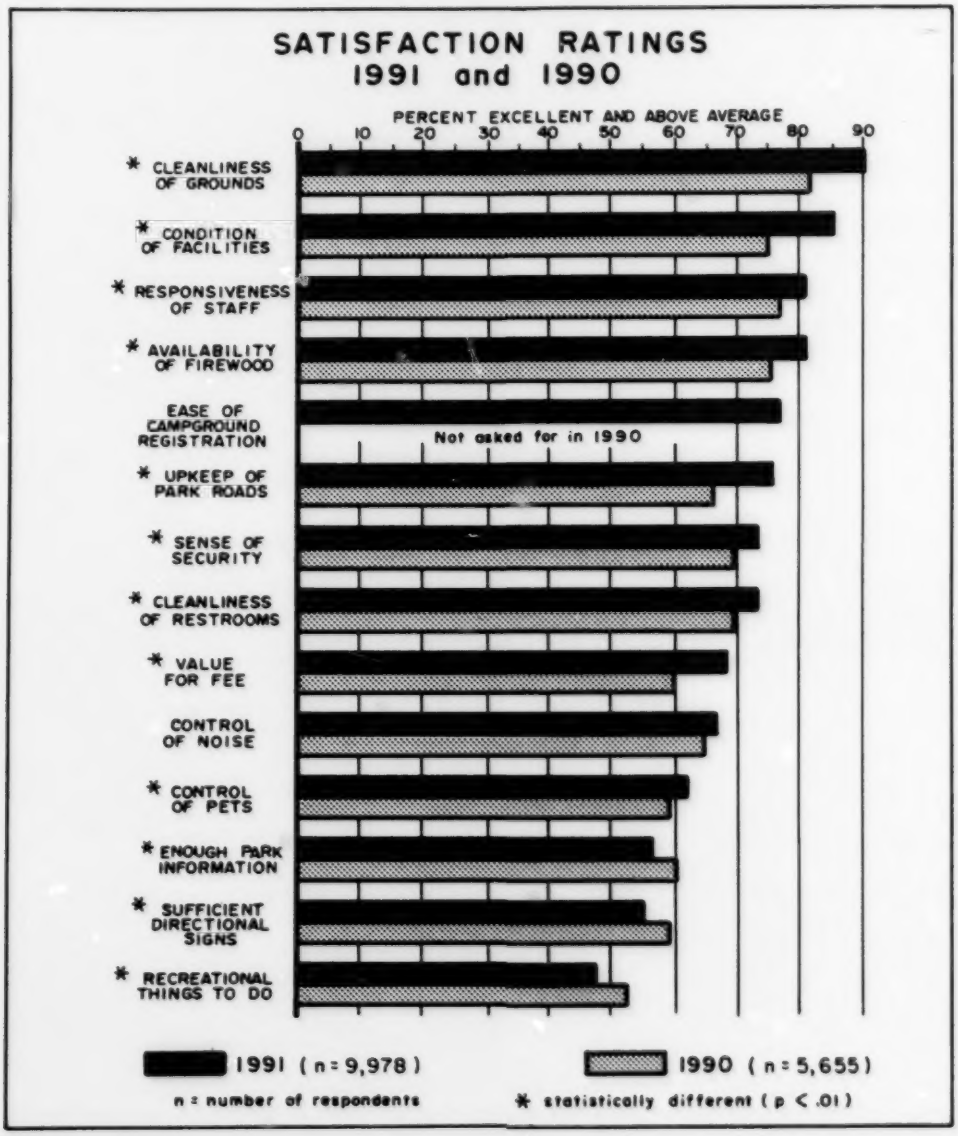


The question was: Listed below are some of the services and facilities provided in provincial parks. For each one, please tell us if you think it is EXCELLENT, ABOVE AVERAGE, AVERAGE, BELOW AVERAGE, or POOR. If the service or facility is NOT AVAILABLE in this park, then circle NA.

Changes in wording (from 1990 to 1991): cleanliness of your campsite to **cleanliness of grounds**; condition of campground facilities to **condition of facilities (buildings, picnic tables, trails, etc.)**; availability of park information in the park to **enough park information (brochures, etc.) at information board**; adequacy of park signs in the park to **sufficient number of directional signs in this park**; helpfulness of staff to **responsiveness of staff to the concerns of visitors.**

3. From 1990 to 1991, satisfaction ratings went up for 8 of the 14 management items and went down for 3 management items.

   In 1991, the greatest increases in ratings occurred in the **condition of facilities (up 10%)** and the **cleanliness of grounds (up 9%)**. The greatest decreases occurred in the **number of recreational things to do (down 4%)** and the **sufficient number of directional signs (down 4%)**.

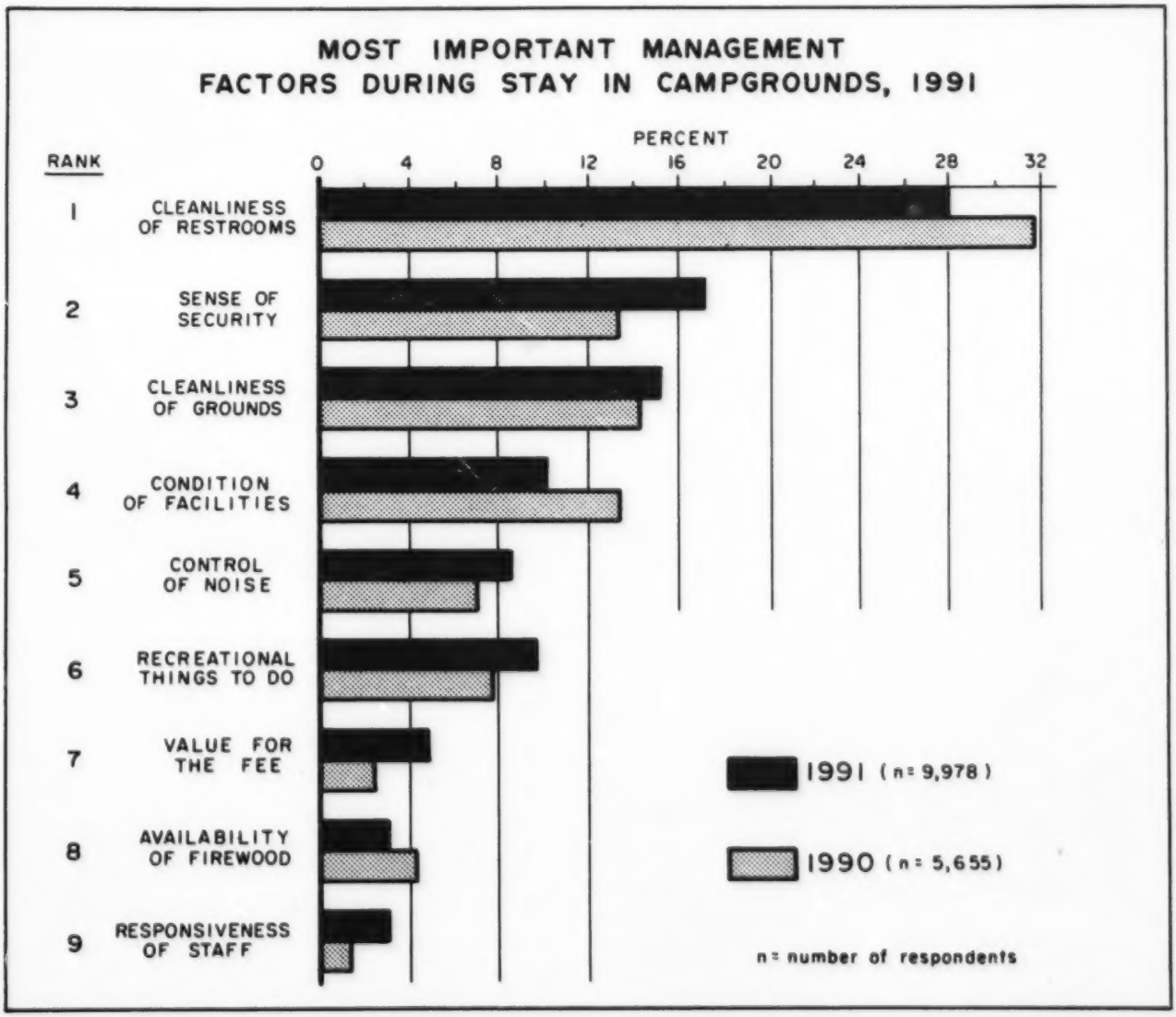


The question was: Listed below are some of the services and facilities provided in provincial parks. For each one, please tell us if you think it is EXCELLENT, ABOVE AVERAGE, AVERAGE, BELOW AVERAGE, or POOR. If the service or facility is NOT AVAILABLE in this park, then circle NA.

Changes in wording (from 1990 to 1991): cleanliness of your campsite to cleanliness of grounds; condition of campground facilities to condition of facilities (buildings, picnic tables, trails, etc.); availability of park information in the park to enough park information (brochures, etc.) at information board; adequacy of park signs in the park to sufficient number of directional signs in this park; helpfulness of staff to responsiveness of staff to the concerns of visitors.

4. Both in 1991 and 1990, the most important management item to park visitors during their stay in provincial park campgrounds was **cleanliness of restrooms**.

   While there were some shifts in the rankings of importance for 1991 and 1990, the next 3 most important items in both years were **sense of security, cleanliness of grounds** and **condition of facilities**.



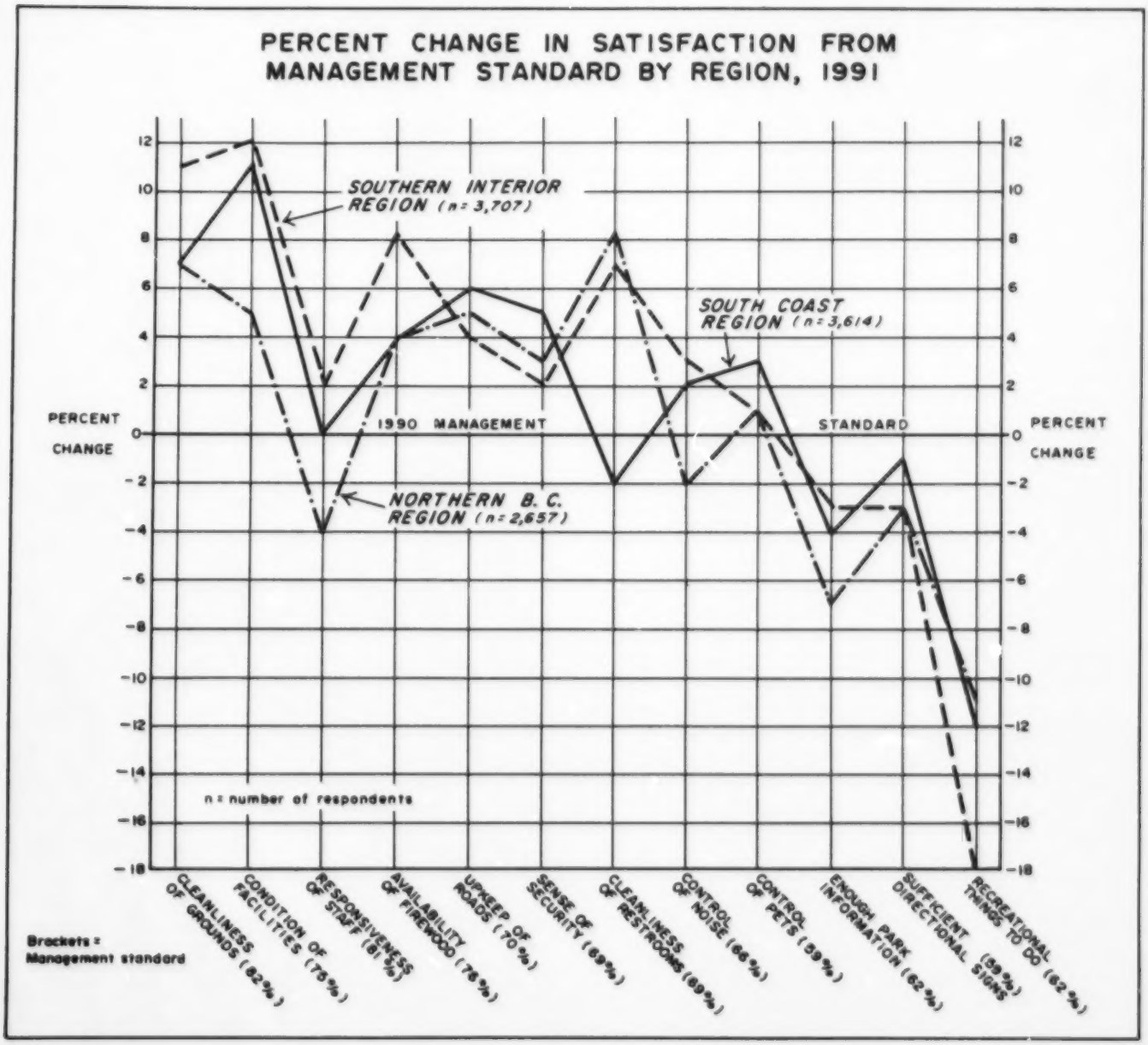
The question in 1991 was: Which of the above facilities and services are most important to you during your stay in this campground?

The question in 1990 was: Which of the above facilities and services are most important to you while you are staying in this campground?

5. The rating for the most important item, **cleanliness of restrooms (72%)**, was strongly influenced by **higher ratings** in the **Northern BC Region (77%)** and the **Southern Interior Region (74%)**.

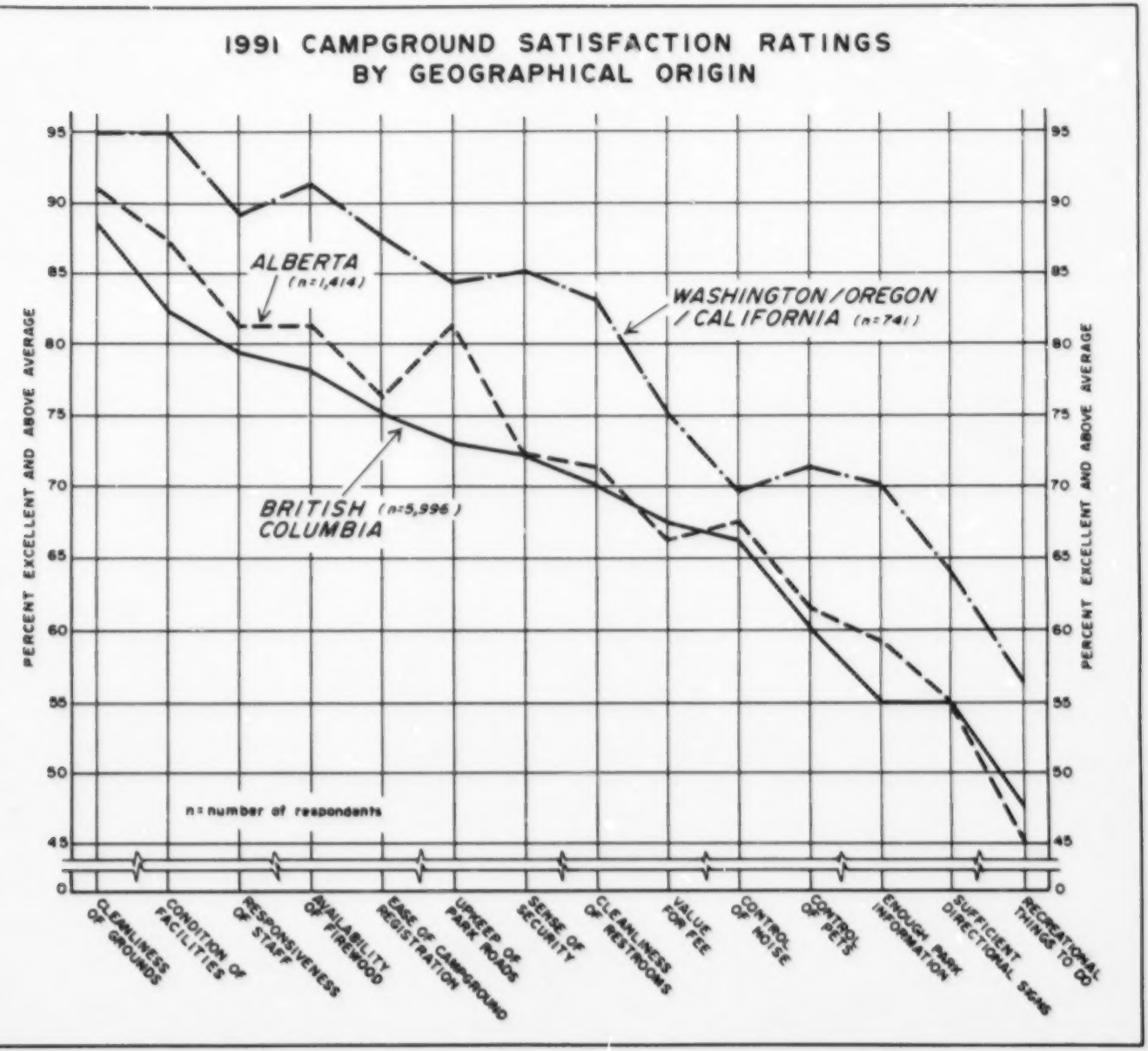
   All three regions contributed strongly to the higher ratings for the next three most important items **(sense of security, cleanliness of grounds** and **condition of facilities)**.

   The rating for **recreational things to do (48%)** in **all three regions was lower than the management standard (62%)**.


PERCENT CHANGE IN SATISFACTION FROM MANAGEMENT STANDARD BY REGION, 1991
SOUTHERN INTERIOR REGION (n=3,707)
SOUTH COAST REGION (n=3,614)
NORTHERN B.C. REGION (n=2,657)
1990 MANAGEMENT STANDARD
PERCENT CHANGE
PERCENT CHANGE
n = number of respondents
Brackets = Management standard
CLEANLINESS OF GROUNDS (82%)
CONDITION OF FACILITIES (75%)
RESPONSIVENESS OF STAFF (81%)
AVAILABILITY OF FIREWOOD (78%)
UPKEEP OF ROADS (70%)
SENSE OF SECURITY (69%)
CLEANLINESS OF RESTROOMS (69%)
CONTROL OF NOISE (66%)
CONTROL OF PETS (59%)
ENOUGH PARK INFORMATION (62%)
SUFFICIENT DIRECTIONAL SIGNS (59%)
RECREATIONAL THINGS TO DO (62%)

6. The **ratings for all items**, except **control of noise**, were significantly **higher** among park visitors from **Washington, Oregon and California** than among park visitors from **British Columbia**.

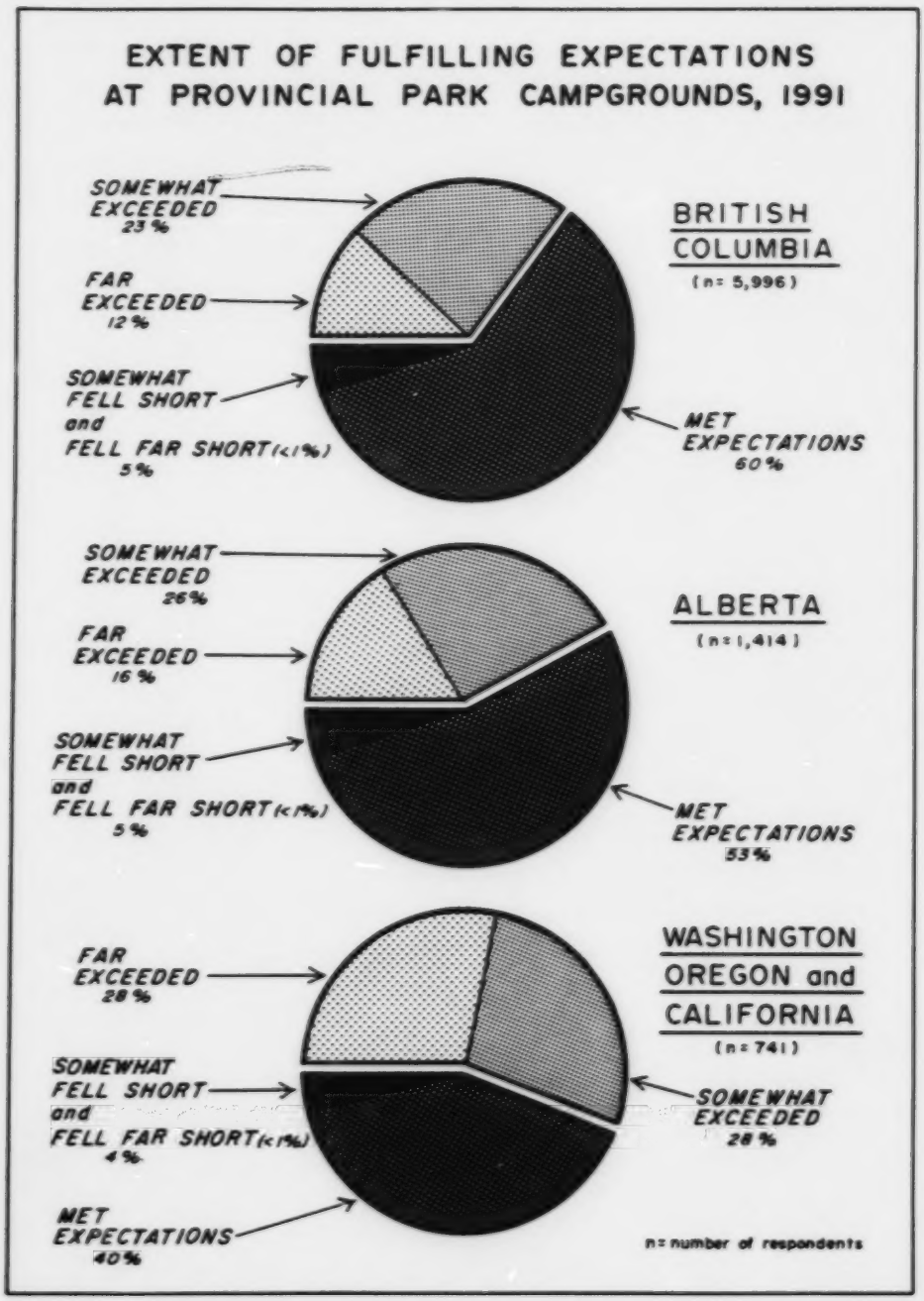
While ratings between Albertans and British Columbians were similar for most items, there were 5 items in which the ratings were **higher among Albertans** than among British Columbians: **cleanliness of grounds, condition of facilities, upkeep of park roads, availability of firewood** and **enough park information**.



The question was: (In or near) what town is your home located?

7. The extent to which **original expectations were somewhat exceeded or far exceeded** was **higher** among respondents from **Washington, Oregon, California (56%)** and **Alberta (42%)** than among respondents from **British Columbia (35%).**

   The extent to which **original expectations were somewhat exceeded or far exceeded** was also much **higher** among **first time residents (72%)** than **repeat visitors (26%).**



The question was: All in all, how well did your stay in this campground live up to your original expectations? The response alternatives were: FAR EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS, SOMEWHAT EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS, MET EXPECTATIONS, SOMEWHAT FELL SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS, FELL FAR SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS.

VISITOR SATISFACTION AT

BEACH-PICNIC AREAS

DAY-USE (PICNIC) AREAS SUMMARY

VISITOR CHARACTERISTICS

A large majority of park visitors who used day use areas in provincial parks in 1991 came from British Columbia (71%). This compares with 81% in 1990. About half of all day users came from and returned to their homes on the same day, while the remainder were on a longer vacation trip. Slightly more than half (54%) of day users were repeat visitors.

VISITOR SATISFACTION

The two management factors that received the **highest satisfaction ratings** (% excellent and above average) for day use (picnic) areas in 1991 were **the cleanliness of grounds (87%) and the condition of facilities (86%)**. The high rating for cleanliness of grounds is significant because it is usually rated the most important management factor by park visitors during their visit in the park day use area.

Seven day use park services earned higher satisfaction ratings in 1991 than in 1990. These were: **responsiveness of staff to the concerns of visitors (up 13%), condition of facilities (up 11%), cleanliness of grounds (up 9%), cleanliness of restrooms (up 6%), control of noise (up 4%), upkeep of Park Roads (up 3%)** and **Sense of Security (up 3%).**

New management standards were achieved in the 1991 survey for **cleanliness of grounds** (new standard is 87%) and the **condition of facilities** (new standard is 86%).

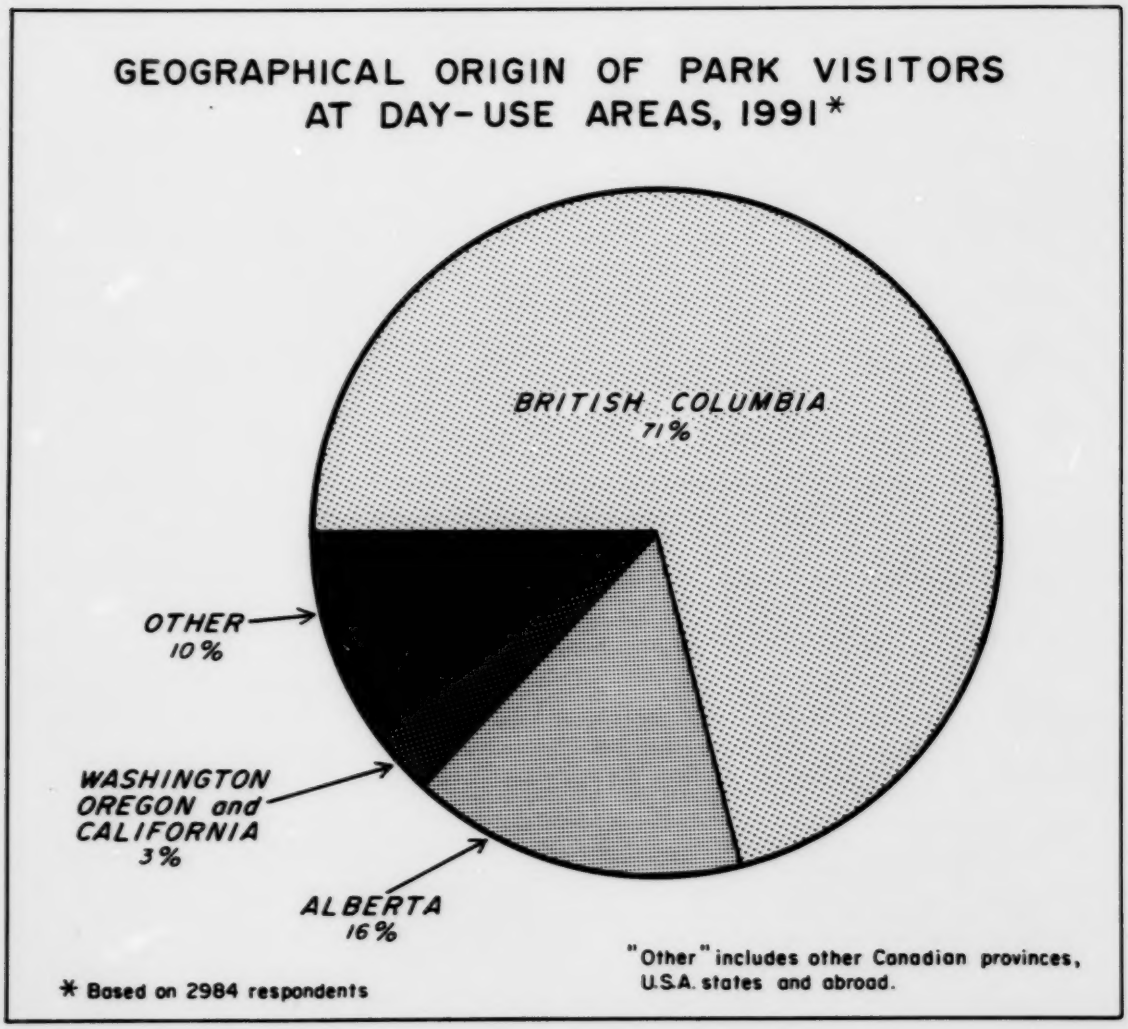
Finally, the day use area management factor that received the **lowest satisfaction rating was recreational things to do in the park (42%)**. Both in the 1989 and 1990 satisfaction surveys, this factor was rated the lowest of all eleven management factors.

DETAILED FINDINGS

1. Slightly more than 7 in 10 park visitors at day use areas came from British Columbia.

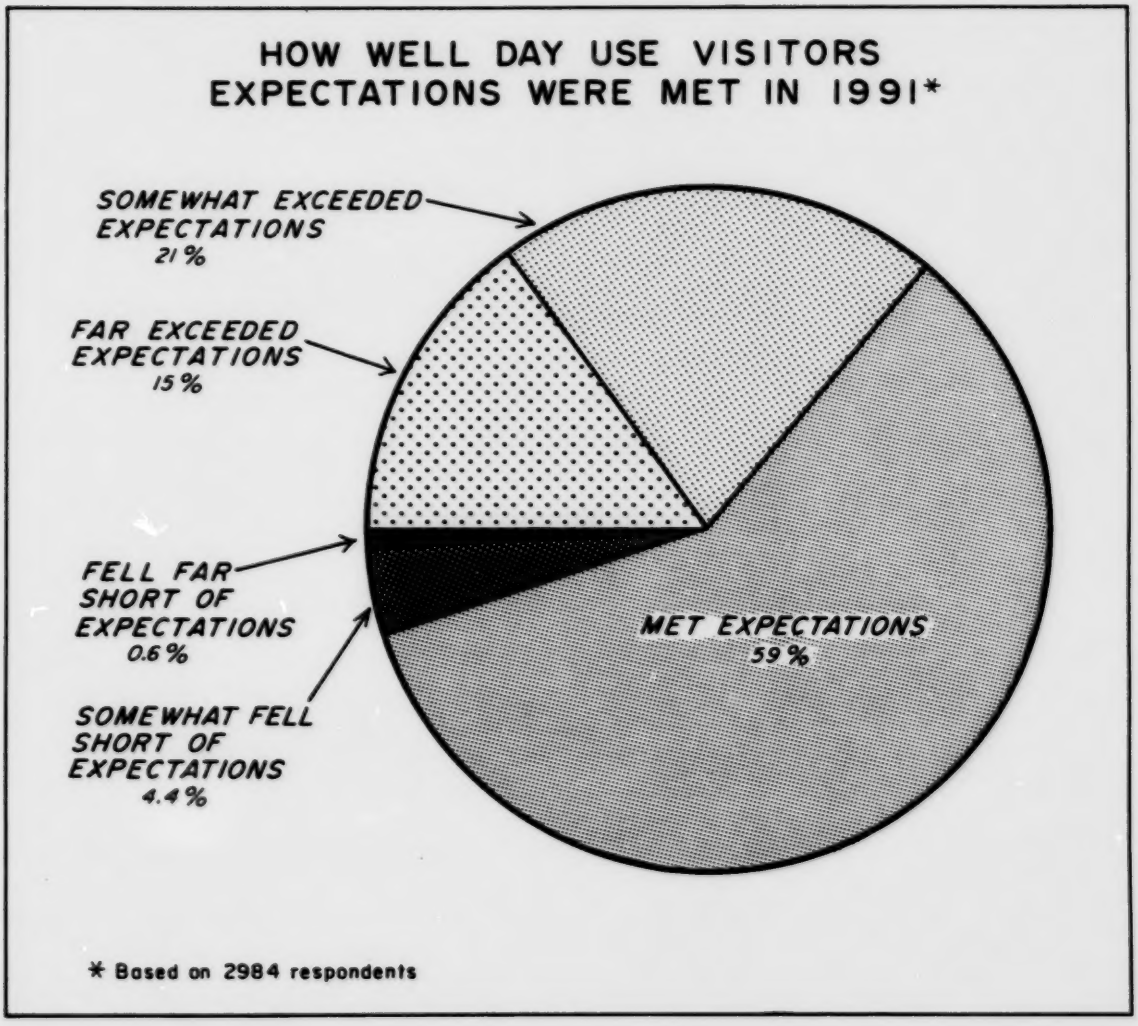
   About 50 percent of park visitors leave and return to their homes on the same day, while the remainder indicated they were on a longer vacation trip.

   Over half (54%) of day users are repeat visitors.


GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF PARK VISITORS AT DAY-USE AREAS, 1991*
BRITISH COLUMBIA 71%
OTHER 10%
WASHINGTON OREGON and CALIFORNIA 3%
ALBERTA 16%
* Based on 2984 respondents
"Other" includes other Canadian provinces, U.S.A. states and abroad.

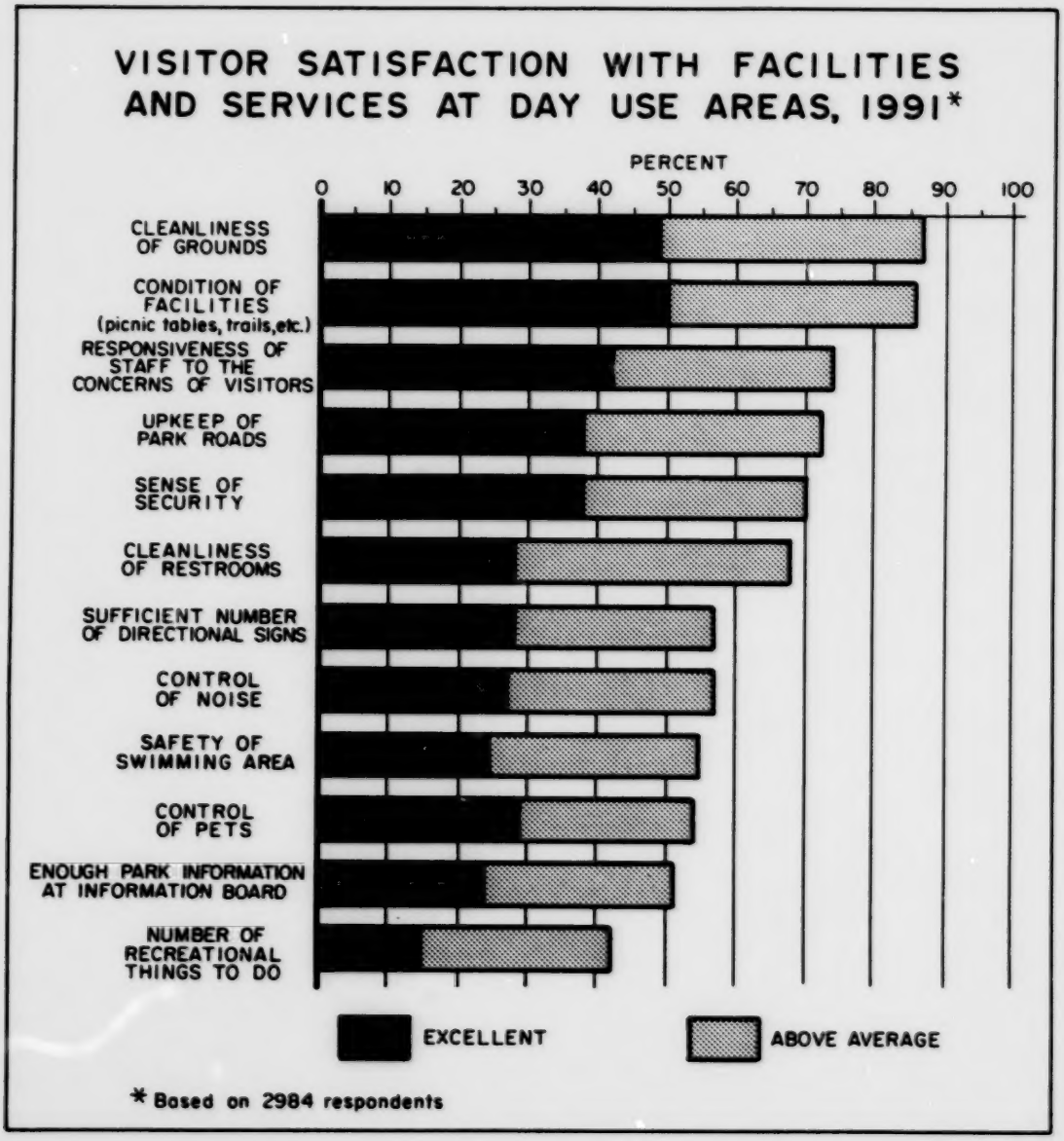
The questions were: (In or near) what town or city is your home located? Is your visit to this day-use area on in which you will leave and return to your home on the same day, or is it part of a longer trip?

2. Ninety-five percent of day use visitors felt that their visit had either met or exceeded their expectations. Only five percent felt their visit had fallen short of their expectations.



The question was: All in all, how well did your visit to this day-use area live up to your original expectations? 1. Far exceeded expectations; 2. Somewhat exceeded expectations; 3. Met expectations; 4. Somewhat fell short of expectations; 5. Fell far short of expectations.

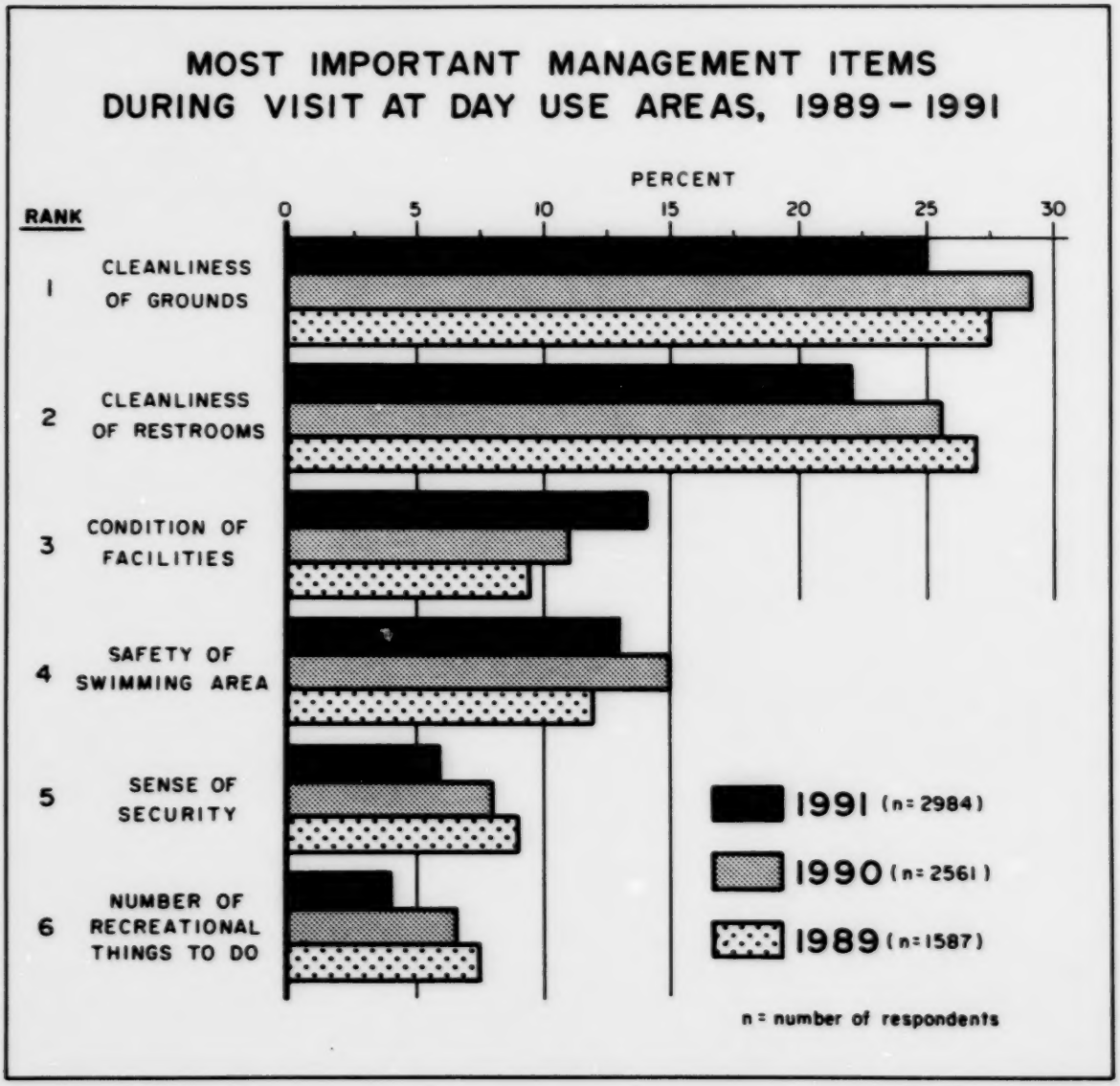
3. In 1991, 87% of the campers rated the **cleanliness of the grounds** as excellent or above average. Eighty-six percent rated the **condition of facilities** as excellent or above average.



The question was: Listed below are some of the services and facilities provided in provincial parks. For each one, please tell us if you think it is **EXCELLENT, ABOVE AVERAGE, AVERAGE, BELOW AVERAGE, or POOR.** If you did not use facility or service, please check the box and then answer other items the best that you can. If the service or facility is **NOT AVAILABLE** in the park, then circle NA.

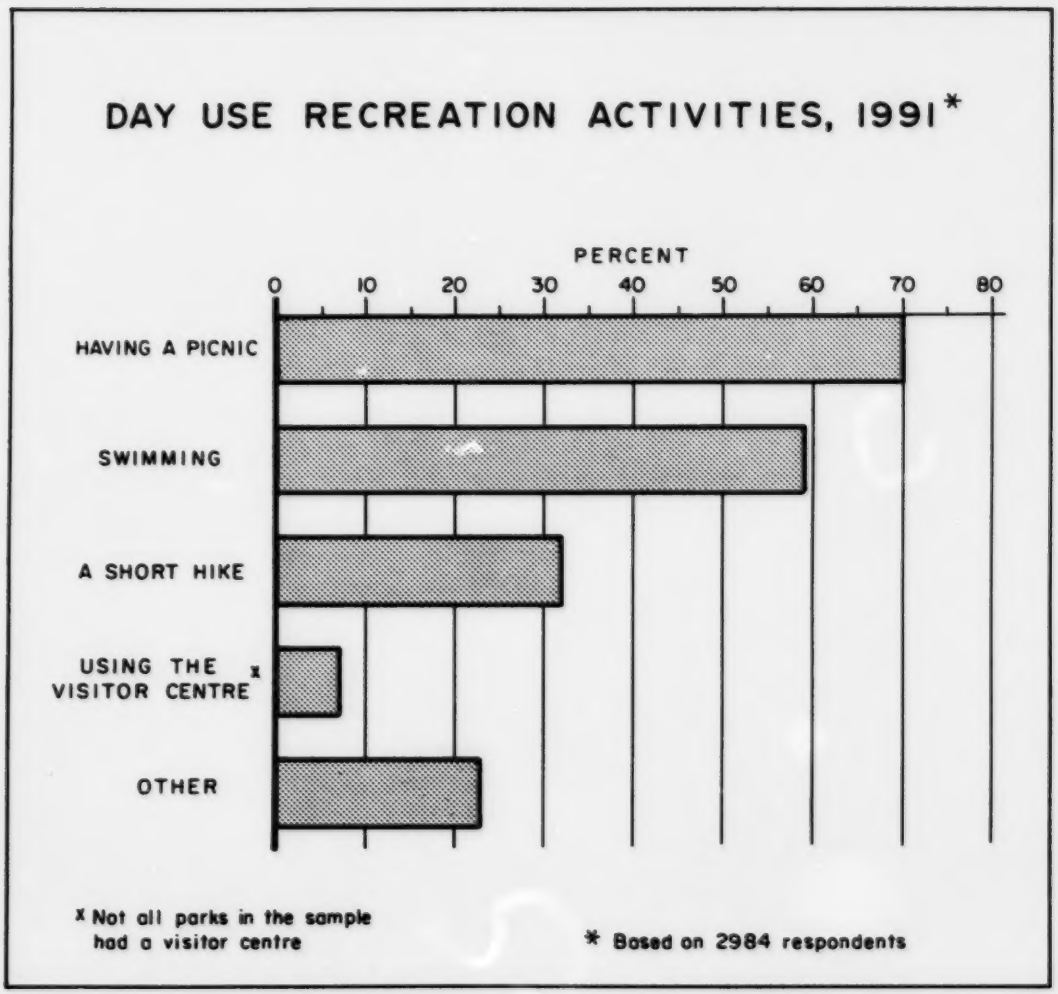
4. In 1991, the six management items that park visitors to day use areas felt were **most important** to them while they were using day use areas were: **cleanliness of grounds (25%), cleanliness of restrooms (22%), condition of facilities (14%), safety of swimming area (13%),** sense of security **(6%),** and **number of recreational things to do (4%).**

   The rank order of these six management items has remained nearly the same since 1987.



The question was: Which of the above facilities and services are most important to your while you are in this day-use area?

5. In the 1991 satisfaction survey, the three most popular recreation activities in the day use areas were: **picnicking (70%), swimming (60%), and taking a short hike (32%).**



The question was: Which of the following activities will you do during your visit to this park? HAVING A PICNIC; SWIMMING; TAKING A SHORT HIKE (2 HOURS OR LESS); USING THE VISITOR CENTRE; OTHER (Please specify); NONE OF THESE;

6. VISITOR PROFILE INFORMATION.

The following information provides a general picture of the "average" day-use visiting party:

The "average" party:

* travelled about 96 kilometres (62 miles) to the park
* had four people
* stayed for approximately five hours
* spent approximately $57.00 on the day of the trip
* **55%** of day-use parties had children under **17 years** of age.
* **40%** of day-use parties had a child **0-4** years of age.
* The average respondent was **42 years of age.**
* **Two thirds of visitors** stayed **3 hours** or more.